



Joint News Release

US Army
Joint Readiness Training Center and Ft Polk
US Forest Service
Kisatchie National Forest



For more information, contact: US Army – Dan Nance (337) 531-7203 / US Forest Service – Jim Caldwell (318) 473-7168

Release Number 071903

July 31, 2003

Public Meetings scheduled for Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Fort Polk, the US Forest Service and the Federal Aviation Administration are holding public meetings throughout the state to receive public input regarding a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) being prepared by the three agencies.

Public meetings will be held from 2:00pm to 6:30 pm on the following dates and at the following locations:

August 19, 2003
Landmark Hotel
3080 Colony Blvd
Leesville, LA

August 25, 2003
AmeriSuites Hotel
6080 Bluebonnet Blvd
Baton Rouge, LA

August 26, 2003
England Airpark Community Center
1718 Kegleman
Alexandria, LA

The Department of Army and the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and the Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) (as cooperating agencies) have announced the availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to assess the potential impacts associated with implementing force transformation and installation mission support activities at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and Fort Polk, Louisiana, along with the long-term use of Kisatchie National Forest lands for military training. The DEIS was prepared to analyze the impacts of future training activities for transformed Army units and other units stationed at Fort Polk, as well as proposed Army activities needed to support transformation and ongoing installation missions.

The Army's proposed action involves fielding of new vehicles and equipment; construction and improvement of firing ranges, roads, stream crossings, and support facilities; land use agreements and leases; training and deployment of Army troops; and continued environmental stewardship. In addition, the DEIS considers a Forest Service proposal to thin approximately 21,500 acres of upland pine stands on the Vernon Unit, Calcasieu Ranger District of the Kisatchie National Forest to improve habitat conditions for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. The forest thinning would also support military training on the Vernon Unit. The FAA proposes to approve amendment of the Alexandria International Airport Layout Plan to incorporate proposed Army projects and activities at England Industrial Airpark. A range of alternatives, including no action, was identified in the DEIS.

--MORE--

Public Meetings Scheduled 2/2/2

The JRTC, established at Fort Polk in 1993, is the only Combat Training Center devoted to and capable of supporting Army light infantry brigade-level training. Fort Polk also serves as an Army power projection platform from which forces deploy by air, rail and sea to areas of operation around the world. It is home to the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment (Light) (2d ACR) and several other rapid deployment and combat service support units.

At Fort Polk, the Army has designated the 2d ACR to transform to a Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) cavalry unit that will employ the Army's new Stryker combat vehicle. Following its transformation, the 2d ACR will become the 2d Cavalry Regiment, which will be a unique unit within the Army due to its mission and organization. In addition to transformation of the 2d ACR, SBCT units stationed at other Army installations would participate in periodic rotational exercises at JRTC and Fort Polk.

The Army is also proposing continued long-term use of Forest Service lands and renewal of its Special Use Permit authorizing that use. The Army is currently using portions of the Kisatchie National Forest for training and is proposing additional training and construction activities in certain areas.

The Army's Intermediate Staging Base for rotational units is located at England Industrial Airpark. Additional facilities would be constructed at the airpark to support rapid deployment of the 2d ACR following its transformation.

The decision to be made by the Army is how to provide for military training, readiness and facilities requirements while ensuring the sustained use of resources entrusted to the stewardship of the Army. The decision to be made by the Forest Service is what military activities and land uses may occur on national forest lands and how to balance military and non-military uses while sustaining resources entrusted to Forest Service stewardship. The Forest Service will also decide whether or not to conduct thinning of upland pine stands for habitat improvement for the red-cockaded woodpecker on portions of the Vernon Unit of the Forest. The FAA will make decisions with respect to the Alexandria International Airport Layout Plan as influenced by proposed Army projects and activities at England Industrial Airpark.

Interested citizens can learn more about the DEIS and proposed transformation and training activities and offer comment and input on the DEIS at public meetings to be held throughout the state. Meetings will be held in Leesville, Alexandria, and Baton Rouge.

The DEIS is available online at <http://notes.tetrattech-ffx.com/PolkEIS.nsf>. Comments on the DEIS or requests for copies of the document can be sent to:

Public Affairs Office
Attn: Dan Nance
7073 Radio Road
Fort Polk, LA 71459-5342

Phone (337) 531-2703
Fax (337) 531-6014
Email: EIS@polk.army.mil

-END-